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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [TH](#) [BM](#)  
SUBJECT: THAILAND TO PUSH FOR DIALOGUE IN BURMA

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. During a meeting with MFA Permanent Secretary Theerakun Niyom, the Ambassador reviewed U.S. policy towards Rangoon and emphasized the important role the RTG could play in encouraging broad and inclusive political dialogue in Burma. The Permanent Secretary expressed agreement, and signaled that the RTG would work closely with the U.S. to press for inclusive, free, and fair elections in Burma this year. Septel will address other topics discussed in the meeting. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During a January 12 introductory call on newly-appointed MFA Permanent Secretary Theerakun Niyom, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of ASEAN engaging Burma on the upcoming elections. In particular, the Ambassador expressed U.S. hope that the RTG would encourage the Burmese government to engage in constructive dialogue with the political opposition, including the National League for Democracy and ethnic minority groups, in order to ensure that elections were as free and fair as possible, the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners would be part of this. He further emphasized that the U.S. policy review should not be viewed as a conclusion to the issue of democracy in Burma, which might be interpreted as permitting a slackening of ASEAN's and the RTG's efforts to bring substantial change in Burma, but rather as the beginning of a more meaningful engagement with Rangoon.

¶3. (C) Permanent Secretary Theerakun ensured the Ambassador that the RTG would do its best to engage the Burmese regime to ensure that elections in Burma were free and transparent. Theerakun said the RTG had been hearing from its sources that the elections would be held in October after the announcement of election laws in April. The Permanent Secretary noted that the RTG could better analyze the situation and determine next steps once the announcement of election laws had been made, and that the RTG would do this in close consultation with the U.S. He also acknowledged that the political situation in Burma could not continue on its present course as doing so "would present an obstacle to the advancement of Thailand and the ASEAN community as a whole."

¶4. (C) The Ambassador suggested that the approach of consulting regularly that the U.S., South Korea, and Japan have taken towards North Korea could be a model for how the U.S. and key regional partners approach dialogue with Burma. Theerakun agreed that an integrated approach like this would be essential to avoid sending Burma mixed messages and

assured the Ambassador that the RTG was ready to cooperate closely with the U.S.

15. (C) Theerakun stated that the January 13-14 ASEAN Ministers retreat in Danang, Vietnam would be an excellent opportunity for the ASEAN community to emphasize the importance of meaningful political dialogue in Burma.  
JOHN